

Undead 251

Chapter 251: Influence

Tulnas had told all the ladies in his Guild about Skullius' issue, the curse, informing them that they were not to help him with anything, as this would incur on them, certain death.

Presumably.

Fortunately for Tulnas, even though not all his Guild members were his lovers, they still regarded him very highly above other men and they would usually approach them with caution, their opinions of them much lower because of Tulnas' standard.

For this particular mission, he had instructed, Gertreld, Natalika and Ginie to not, under any circumstances, help Skullius even if he was in a dire situation.

He would be handling that part as his 'friends' were a safer bet for such a case.

Even though, he didn't think too highly of this curse that Skullius had offered limited information for to begin with, he still wouldn't endanger his ladies.

At this moment, everyone watched as Skullius held two red gems which he had taken from the spatial storage ring that Tulnas had severed his connection to and flung at him, absorbing the spots of energy within.

Like the first time he had taken in this massive amount of energy in ref Enriching gems, Skullius felt overwhelmed for a moment, his eyes closing shut as he contained bursts of pleased moans.

His body reacted quite a bit as he started to absorb more of the Enriching gems quicker and quicker while Tulnas and the rest watched.

The changes to Skullius' body this time weren't that pronounced despite him taking in 150 of these!

It seemed his body had reached some kind of limit in terms of changes, but this did not in any way leave Skullius concerned, as the boons he got were tremendous!

A red Enriching gem could add 3 points to his constitution.

150 gems could add 450 points, which meant...

"Fuuuu..." Skullius breathed out a burst of hot air as his flesh wriggled.

This was a massive amount of stats he had just received.

After every factor of a 100, 30 stat points would be added to all physique related stats plus his total mana; Agility, Strength, Endurance, Health and Mana.

So, this round of absorption, Skullius received a 120 stat point increase to all these stats!

"You seem satisfied," Tulnas said with a light smirk. "If it was anyone else, I'd worry they'd still be a one trick pony, but for you, this should aid you in your combat."

Skullius nodded as he looked at his hand.

As alluded to before, stat point increases in humans were much different than for beasts and technically speaking, Skullius' Penetrator form which used the beast type cultivation system of evolutions was wouldn't enjoy thus weight in stats.

With the joy that came with this, Skullius was even more proud of how he could most definitely finish the Task to the Tenth level now.

Natalika who had been silent while harnessing her senses for spatial awareness suddenly spoke as she felt Skullius' rise in strength.

"Will you accept a duel with me now that you have additional strength to spare? I still promise to not lop off any part of you," she said as she turned to Skullius.

The Discount Human once again felt her energy pricking and slicing at his skin, which made him very nervous.

"Give it a rest, Natalika. Can't you behave more ladylike for just an hour? Indulge in something else other than fighting," Gertreld said as she hugged Tulnas' arm.

"Un, un! You should really stop asking everyone you see for a fight big sister, Natalika. It's not... proper, yes proper. It's improper!" Ginie said as she once again struggled with words.

"It's the fastest way to becoming stronger. The faster I battle and win, the quicker I will be in reaching the pinnacle of power. I still have my elder siblings to prove wrong," Natalika said as she squeezed her sword.

Gertreld and Ginie quietened down after Natalika said this.

Tulnas noticed the tension and decided to step in.

"You will prove them wrong. That I guarantee," Tulnas said as he gently held Natalika's thigh. "But first, learn to cultivate your mind. How you speak and how you react to speech. It's also important for a warrior. No one will recognise a sword master who cannot engage with people and know how to pass down his or her wisdom in simple speech."

"...I see," Natalika said, calming down.

"Besides, you won't get to rest your sword for long. We'll almost there."

Into the distance, the lands changed from being densely vegetated to being largely full of tall heat resistant grass and tall trees that boasted thick barks.

The temperatures were especially brutal in this area of the region and Skullius noticed it, though his physique could now handle it without keeling over.

Many people with distinct skin colours passed the carriage, going about their way or visiting the distant towns and villages.

It was bustling.

A few hours later, the carriage reached a large town that the locals would call Central, where a mix of people could be seen engaging in all kinds of activities; walking into different shops, buying from stalls, riding horses as they travelled to special spots in the town and so on.

As the carriage entered the town, many turned to it with smiles, recognising its decor as belonging to a certain Guild they knew quite well.

"Ah... they're back so early."

"Wow, that's the third visit in three months!"

"I hope he brought big sister Renialid! I can't wait to see...ahem... feel... ahem... shower her with praise."

"Hehe... we're definitely going to shower her with something...hehe..."

"GET AWAY FROM HERE YOU DEGENERATES!"

Just how far Tulnas' influence reached showed as a large crowd began to gather while giving way for the carriage to move forward.

From children to adults, some even left their stalls where they were selling foodstuffs to rush to greet their collective idols.

The carriage eventually came to a hold, Skullius who was inside marvelling at the amount of repute that Tulnas enjoyed.

This was ridiculous.

A few Knights appeared in the distance, warding away the crowd for a distinguished man who looked a little too old to hold a high position to pass through.

His sharp, velvet eyes that and and grey hair that was starting to recede were rather imposing, carrying a heavy weight of authority.

He was the Town leader.

Beside him was a lean but tall girl with beeline honey coloured hair tied into a pony tail.

Her diamond shaped face widened as she smiled, seeing that Tulnas and the others were here, finally.

It felt like an eternity since she had been left here.

The planning must have been successful.

The door to the carriage opened and everyone disembarked, the crowds cheering when Tulnas greeted everyone with a gentle smile and a wave of his hand before walking up to the Town Leader and shaking his hand.

"I'm glad you returned quickly as you said you would," the old man said with a nod.

"This is a matter of great importance after all," Tulnas said as he looked around. "It doesn't seem like the situation turned more sour after I left."

"Indeed. We have her to thank," the old man said as he turned to the girl at his side whose eyes never left Tulnas' face.

The Guild leader turned his gaze towards her.

"Oh, is that so," he said.

"However, we cannot dally when we have so much that we should tell. With this information, perhaps you can put those heathens to the sword," the old man said.

Chapter 252: How He Does It

As Skullius looked around, taking in the rather well-built infrastructure, and the clean streets that were populated with well dressed and well fed people, he couldn't help but compare it to the other settlements he had seen so far.

A town was, of course, a town and would usually not house many people but serve as a central point for selling goods and services.

The structure of this settlement was rather refined, and the Discount Human could wager that aesthetically, it looked a lot better than Eofel, a city.

This was the product of Tulnas' skill in managing the areas under his jurisdiction.

When he and his Guild had risen to their current status, given jurisdiction to the settlements in the East, Tulnas had already plotted out a plan for how he would go about managing the people and lands.

He had presented this plan to the Town leader who at the time had been lax about any sort of development to his town or the surroundings areas.

This, put into context, wasn't his fault.

'Getting used to the depreciating standards that came with the area while shying away from effort,' he called it.

Tulnas had expected such when dealing with an elderly man who had been leading the town for so long, but instead of forcing the man to step down, he had taken a different approach.

After extensive research, Tulnas identified what was most lacking in the areas, the villages, the towns and all on top of the elephant in the room, which he worked around.

Finance was obviously lacking, along with ideas on what most of the individuals dwelling in these areas could partake in.

Most would want to head to Inhone City to try out for becoming mercenaries but the truth given would usually be disappointing as they would be more inclined to defy their given Directions which pointed towards farming, carpentry, teaching and so on.

Arduous activities, in their opinions, that were simply impossible in the region because of a certain 'elephant.'

Most would choose to defy their Direction, mainly because many no longer believed in the sentence of the Deities anymore but also because facilities to learn these were rather... lacking.

Bring given Directions that conflicted with where they were situated further fuelled unbelief.

The young and handsome took these social qualms into account too and took action.

Tulnas' first course of action was to plead with the Town leader for a permit to built structures that he would have the Town leader check for quality in the town, even though he didn't need one.

If he wanted, he could have exerted his dominance from his rights like most Guilds would but knowing that many of the people in the area shared the same lack of enthusiasm for change as the Town leader, Tulnas found that it was better to work with the man for the change.

If the old man stood for new ways to adopt information, this effect could very easily and smoothly transfer to the masses.

Thankfully, the Town leader gave him the consent for construction without so much as a care as the coin came Tulnas' own pocket.

After building two institutions and hiring some qualified personnel with no lack of experience, Tulnas had announced their grand opening of the institutions, showing the seal of approval he had been given by the Town leader.

At first very few joined the institutions, but because of the quality of the teaching service that was rendered, the results for these few became very apparent as they started to make names for themselves by committing to carpentry, building and agriculture, earning from the skills they cultivated and continued to cultivate.

This drew in a lot of others who sought to learn, giving in to their prospective Directions and actively seeing changes.

Rich lands without any use were quickly taken advantage of, plain lands used to build sturdy homes for those lacking such to live in, crops of all kinds farmed, animals reared for meat and minerals mined more efficiently.

One would ask why such things had not been present in this area to be begin with and the answer would be... that was a false claim.

All these had existed on a limited scale, dwindling because of the high spawning rate of Clusters, which could be seen by the high temperatures in this area over the average scorch in the entire region.

These made this area prone to destruction by weaker monsters that broke through Clusters faster than expected and raided populated areas before the mercenaries could arrive, a typical pattern for Guilds when weaker Clusters were involved.

This was the norm before this area was assigned a Guild to man it as under their jurisdiction.

Because of the Clusters, many activities were put on hold and trade with Inhone and other cities and towns was what sustained the masses, others migrating to distant settlements which left these lands with a significant amount of brain drain and lack of manpower.

Year after year, this grew more and more problematic, as people lost the passion to do anything but eat only what was brought from other settlements.

Erkus could not deal with this issue definitely, as the only option had been relocation, which wouldn't really solve the problem.

The fact that most of those that remained simply refused to move didn't help his case either.

Tulnas had taken advantage of this, however.

Along with reviving the passion for enriching activity with his scheme, Tulnas and his then Guild members had ensured that security wouldn't be a problem.

And surely, the residents of both the towns and villages were awed by the power and efficiency of Tulnas' Guild.

Casualties dropped from hundreds to none in a month, which bolstered the people's confidence when they saw that it wasn't a one time thing.

There were always consistent and quick responses by the Guild when matters regarding the safety of the people were concerned and while, in truth, most of the Clusters that spawned were white which meant easier work, they were still numerous.

And the Harem Guild took care of it.

Soon, the Town leader saw the rejuvenated spirits of the people and decided to publicly work hand in hand with Tulnas which bolstered the people's confidence even more.

Such was the journey that further led to expansion, cutting off the full reliance on unfair trade and creating a high self sufficient zone that grew vast in a couple of months, extending its influence to other parts of the region that became reliant on it.

Such was a brief recount on the history on where the respect and love for Tulnas came from.

At the current moment, Tulnas and company were being briefed on what had happened in the past weeks and the results of the stealthy investigations by the pony tailed girl who looked excited while doing so.

They were within the Town Leader's office, which was as formal and graceful as it could be, showing the old man's taste in embroidery and masonry.

The pony tail girl was one of the members of the Harem Guild, Scorta, who was a C rank Form User. An assassin.

She had led the investigation on the whereabouts of the Evenfall and so far, her findings were promising.

"I think the Evenfall is setting up camp in places like this, where numerous Clusters appearing in one day are a norm, and thus it makes it easier for them to hide as they spread the chaos. It's just a theory of mine, so..." the girl said as her big eyes seemed to spell that she wanted some sort of reaction from Tulnas, who unfortunately gave none as he instead urged her to continue.

"Ahem, thankfully, we managed to further narrow down their whereabouts but we also didn't proceed after a certain point. I thought it would be better if we waited for your arrival before he went on," Scorta said.

"A wise choice. They may already know that we are on to them, which is why I wanted to hasten the operation. What's the status with the civilians? Are there anymore recurring illnesses or... sudden frenzies like before?" Tulnas asked with a stern voice.

"Ah... there have been a few cases but I thought it would be better to deal with them after the operation," Scorta said as she sat up straight.

Tulnas mulled it over for a hot second before shaking his head.

"No. Let's take care of this now. It won't take long and for all we know, these people may not last any longer," the Guild leader as a light that did NOT look to stem from pity or kindness flashed in his eyes.

Chapter 253: The Noble Soul?

"Hmmm... are you sure, Tulnas? While I admire your desire to save as many lives as possible and surely every one of those you save will be very grateful to you, don't you think that getting on with the operation is more important?" the Town leader who had been silent as Scorta gave a report finally spoke, questioning whether the cost to benefit would be in any way worth considering.

"The last time you tried to heal even one of those who were ill, it took almost half a day and a ton of resources."

Tulnas looked to pause for a moment, everyone's eyes turning to him.

"Give me an approximate number of all those that are still deathly ill or frenzied," the Guild leader said with a serious expression that told everyone that he meant business.

Scorta quickly reported, struggling to maintain a formal and profession front.

"Around a hundred are in critical condition while a few more are in non-life threatening conditions. As for the frenzied and mad, there are a few dozen who have been detained. Guild leader, there's quite a lot of them to tend to..." she said.

"Don't worry," said Tulnas as he stood up, taking split-second glance at Skullius before he continued to speak. "I'm not being reckless. I believe I have a way to solve this in a shorter span of time."

Scorta's eyes widened.

This was no small claim.

The ailments that were inflicted upon the civilians were not induced by any spell crafted by mana or by a Special technique.

It was caused by the leakage of Primus.

A form of divine energy.

The exposure to such a potent energy was harming the normal civilians who couldn't protect themselves by coating themselves with mana as they lacked the ability to do so even with their underdeveloped white mana cores.

Using powerful special herbs harvested from high ranking Clusters and foreign lands closer to sources of divine energy in addition to special healing techniques that utilised Special skills had managed to ward off the illness in the bodies of the victims as the leakage of this cruel divine energy from the unknown source was extremely limited.

Now, it seemed that Tulnas had a more effective method to protect the civilians.

However, a few things bothered the man.

'Is this leakage on purpose, or is it some kind of slip-up that those bastards just let go. Still, I'm quite sure they are confident in whatever they are doing. Though, the purpose of plunging all three nations into chaos like this must serve some greater purpose. A distraction perhaps?' he thought but shook his head to clear these thoughts.

He only needed to focus on the immediate problem which was also a grand opportunity.

'If I manage to further consolidate my position here, then it will be beneficial when Silrat finally...'

Tulnas smiled inwardly, not finishing the sentence.

"Let's go," he said, Gertreld confidently following after him, as did Ginie who walked on his other side.

Skullius couldn't help but feel that there were many things going on in this young man's head.

He and Red Rage followed, the Town leader also scurrying to see what the young man wanted to do.

As they exited the building, Tulnas turned to Scorta.

"Gather all those who are affected and bring them here. It would also be great if the people in the city gather around too," he said.

Scorta was confused by this order, but she immediately nodded and rushed away to execute it.

Tulnas looked around the city where several individuals noticed him and waved with smiles, a few of the people who had gathered around before having still been waiting outside.

Tulnas gave them light nods to them as he plotted his next move and all its intricacies.

If all went well, he could even kill two birds with a single stone or perhaps even three, which was his goal.

His eyes darted to and from while he twitched his head, making a variety of faces with the occasional clicking of his tongue.

While Ginie, Gertreld and Natalika didn't seem bothered by this, Skullius was deeply curious.

What the flesh was going on with this man?

The Discount Human gathered together all the weird things that this man had done, including his whole 'I'm not talking to you' thing which irritated the heck out of him.

Was he partially insane or something?

Skullius wanted to nudge Natalika and enquire about this peculiarity but he decided against it.

'I'm starting to get too comfortable with asking questions because of Tulnas. Things may go very wrong if it's another person,' he thought.

Soon, it came to pass what Tulnas had ordered.

The plagued and those trapped in madness and frenzy were brought to Tulnas, laid down on mats so that he could do his thing.

Bigger crowds began to gather, trying to find out just what was happening now after they had been summoned.

It didn't take long for the crowds to settle and Tulnas remained silent as if waiting for the perfect moment.

Those with the peculiar illness wiggled and writhed as they suffered from the astronomical amounts of pain brought on by the disease.

On their bodies, boils could be spotted with a dark and bloody colour that repulsed even the multitudes a short distance away.

Their skin seemed to also bubble, stretched thin by other growths that rose from under the cracking skin, a faint purple aura rising from their bodies.

The frenzied yelled out in loud voices, their eyes rolled back as they reddened, creating for a very hair-raising scene of despair.

Tulnas watched as those related to these people had their faces contort with grief and concern, a mother even rushing up to her son who was frenzied as she wept bitterly.

She hugged him tight and turned to Tulnas imploringly, her eyes practically bleeding with tears before she was dragged away.

Everyone turned to the Guild leader, wanting to see if he could do something for these people on the spot.

His blank face gave people a lot less hope than they would have expected.

However....

The Guild leader suddenly brought his right hand to the ring that was on his left hands ring finger.

He inserted a bit of mana wordlessly, causing for something to emerge from the ring.

As everyone squinted, looking closely at the object that Tulnas had pulled out, they saw...

An egg.

An egg as large as a human head lay in Tulnas' hand!

It was golden in colour with a three-pointed star carved into its surface in a dark blue hue.

It shone with a glossy sheen, reflecting the images in its immediate surroundings like a mirror.

The crowds watched with awe as Tulnas raised this egg up high, inserting mana into it which made the star on its surface glow brightly.

SSSHHHH!

Rays of light shone intensely, flashing from the egg as they then rushed outwards, passing through everyone in the entire city with a gorgeous white-blue light!

With its emergence, Tulnas became like a radiant existence from a transcendent race in appearance, his voice bellowing out in a stern and authoritative tone.

"Purge!"

Chapter 254: Purging Impurities

The brilliant light that travelled in an expansive arc had a unique effect as it through an individual with a powerful pushing effect that wasn't meant to stagger or make them fall.

Peculiar oddities would gush out of their bodies, in a hazy form, some looking like dark images in the likeness of the individual who had been stuck by the light!

This truly looked like... a purging.

The purging of impure entities!

Thousands of these dark and ugly beings rose from the thousands of people as the light struck them, these images dissipating into black particles that were lost forever!

It was a wondrous scene, especially when one looked at its effect on those that were afflicted with the ailment and frenzy as the moment the bright arc passed through them, a screech was heard as dark purple mist spilled from their bodies and rose up before it burned!

Sparks of fire devoured it whole, leaving nothing but frozen men and women that had bloodied bodies which slowly began to heal as the lingering halo of light from the arching power touched their bodies!

Those that had been frenzied grew still and calm, breathing in as their eyes returned to normal.

Just like that.

The masses were awed as they recovered, feeling better even when they had not been the ones who needed saving!

They felt refreshed, as if something within them had been washed and made brand new!

Gertreld, Ginie and Natalika smiled as they took in the light's effect which manifested as a temporary boost to their stats and a permanent boost to their blessings.

The Town leader's eyes widened in surprise as he watched this unfold.

He had expected the arduous process of relieving just one of the patients at a time like Tulnas and his group had done on their last visit.

Amidst the awe and joy, one individual was stuck in place as his eyes almost popped out of his sockets!

A mixture of emotion roared from his body as he saw a terrific notification from his guidance!

[An incredibly powerful surge of Divine energy is acting upon your body]

[The surge of Divine energy has identified three impurities which it seeks to purge]

[Doom Factor 1 has been detected – Can be purged]

[Doom Factor 2 has been detected – Cannot be purged]

[UNCoddled has been detected – Can be purged]

[...processing]

[Divine energy detected is insufficient to purge both removable impurities]

[Divine energy can only be harnessed to purge a single impurity of your choice]

Skullius trembled.

This was.... fantastic!

He could get rid of one of the pains in his ass!

What fortune!

What intensely marvellous fortune!

Skullius almost leapt up in joy.

What kind of item was the object that Tulnas held?!

Skullius checked its information right away with his guidance field.

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[Seed of Quintess' Eye]

-???-

???

-Special Effects-

Can purge all odd impurities provided they rank below Divinity.

-Usage limited to after it has been charged with Primus for 500 days-

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...!

Ridiculous!

Even though much of the information on this thing was not shown to Skullius, the effect of this treasure was incredible!

He chose not to waste anymore time as he made his decision.

It could be said that Doom Factor 1 and 2 were greater threats than UNCoddled but Skullius couldn't help but also be concerned about the curse.

In long term, it could easily get him killed if he killed off someone important with powerful witnesses nearby.

Still, though, so far, he was in the clear. If he could at least get rid of the annoying Doom Factor 1 which resumed pursuit after every three days, that would be a great weight off of him.

As Skullius was about to choose, he watched the panel in front of him show some of the words that he dreaded the most!

[Interruption detected...]

"What now?!" Skullius thought as his eyes bulged again.

And then...

A tugging force came from his chest, pulling him downwards with a staggering amount of familiar power!

Skullius had a bad feeling about this, and soon enough, he understood why.

[The 'Binds of Fukal' resist the effects of 'Seed of Quintess' Eye']

[All Divine energy has been negated and forcefully repelled from Discount Human body]

"..."

Skullius... froze.

While there were joyful echoes around of him of celebration as the people rejoiced at having their own saved from disease and madness, he simply wore a blank look as he looked at the screen in front of him which eventually vanished.

The Discount Human finally slumped to the ground, looking dazedly at the sky as he did so.

"WHAT. THE. FLESH?" Skullius said with a low tone of voice.

Red Rage noticed Skullius' chaotic emotions and rushed up to him, placing his hand on Skullius' shoulder.

The Discount Human didn't react.

He had been given hope which was then brutally bashed against a stone.

His own Hidden class was working against him.

The more he thought about it, the more he realised it made sense and he had just been too absorbed in the moment to think clearly.

All blessings from the Deities didn't work on him.

The best evidence was how he wouldn't benefit from the blessing enhancement after clearing a Cluster.

The Discount emitted an agitated sigh.

Even with this knowledge, he was still rather angry.

The crowds rushed up to Tulnas and cheered, going around Skullius who sat as they even lifted the Guild leader up and sang songs of merry.

The old Town leader nodded his head while Gertreld gazed around with an of-course-he's-awesome look.

The other girls looked reverently at Tulnas too, but the man himself wore a subdued smile as he seemed to be trying to sense something, immediately returning the egg in his hand to storage at this moment.

First, he noticed the Discount Human who was seated on the ground with a distraught expression.

'Hmmm. I thought this would help with the curse. His expression tells me that something didn't work out,' Tulnas thought as a sense of caution overwhelmed him on the subject of Skullius curse. 'Oh, well. This confirms that this curse is a lot more troublesome than all of us thought. For now though, it's not the issue I should be most concerned about...'

Tulnas' ocean blue eyes focused on the lands outside of the town.

He spread his senses outward, focusing on the results of his bait.

A distance from the town, a lazy slur of energy started to ooze, signalling the coming of something that Tulnas was readily awaiting.

'There it is...'

Chapter 255: Primal Enemies

Tulnas was a rather religious man at heart. As someone whose Direction was identified to be a talented mercenary with the capability to save many lives, he had no choice but to be exactly that.

In the wake of words that called him out to be someone great, he had worked extremely hard to become the embodiment of that set of words.

All this culminated into explaining his relationship with the Purity, or more specifically, the Priests in the Temple within Inhone City.

Because of his constant visits to the Temple after receiving his Direction, offering prayers as well as speaking with the Priests and Priestesses over a very long time, his relationship with the Temple became very solid.

He benefitted greatly from this relationship by getting access to large amounts of knowledge and some inside information on the Purity. He would also help as many times as he could to solve some issues that required his strength.

All this combined had led to Tulnas' plea to the Temple to lend him an object which could counter hostile Primus energy to be reluctantly accepted as long as he brought back the Seed of Quintess' Eye in one piece.

One of the defensive items that the Temple could use in times of emergencies.

However, this would beg the question...

Where the other areas plagued by this Primus, presumably caused by Evenfall members hiding themselves as they somehow created infinite Clusters also experiencing the disease and frenzy among civilians?

Was there even any Primus discovered in the first place?

The answer was no.

If that was the case, then the powerful Mages in other regions and cities would have discovered this and pinpointed the source of the trouble like Tulnas.

This was why the Guild leader had questioned why there was a leak of Primus energy to begin with, wondering if it was a trap.

At this moment, as the Guild leader's eyes scanned around, his senses pulsing around the city, he noticed traces of dark images coming from all directions.

His eyes instantly narrowed, the atmosphere changing around him to become dark and dreary which made everyone pause their celebrations.

The once raucous crowd stopped cheering as they all turned to Tulnas whose expression showed a peculiar seriousness.

Gertreld instantly knew that something was wrong and released a dome of mana around Tulnas which gently pushed away the civilians from the Guild leader.

Natalika grabbed the hilt of her sword while Ginie twirled her staff with a serious expression that looked quite cute because of her young face.

"Is this what you were waiting for?" Natalika asked, her question looking to have no one it was directed to but she received the relevant response.

"Yes. Get ready," Tulnas said. He smirked as he figured that Natalika would probably notice something that he did as well.

He turned to the civilians in his immediate line of sight and spoke.

"Something has been attracted by the light from the treasure I used earlier. Please get back while my companions and I handle it."

The masses instantly began to organise themselves, realising that Tulnas' sudden change in mood, as they had presumed, was because he had sensed a threat.

Their overwhelming trust in this man which had been raised a few notches higher because of the earlier stunt forced them to rush away from the area in a more or less orderly fashion under the guidance of the Knights.

Ginie immediately took action as she wielded her staff to hasten the process.

"Un, Mage-Form Mimicking Art, Coercion!" she chanted while pointing her staff forward.

An irregularly flowing mass of light bolted from staff with a light purple hue, rushing with a speed nearer to that of the sound into the air!

It rose and branched out in mid-air, turning into thousands streams of this energy that dug into the heads of the many individuals, except the children.

Roughly a third of the masses were affected as in the next moment, they raced at top speed, grabbing the vulnerable and the child as they orderly took them to bunch at the centre of the town, while expertly dodging the unaffected civilians who ran erratically.

The scene was strange but quite intriguing to see as Ginie effectively minimised cases where people crashed into each other as they ran and gathered around.

The young girl squinted hard as she did all this, her ability as a Mind Caster allowing her to pull off large scale operations like this, as a Mage could.

Skullius who was still seething with rage watched this with disinterest as he actually paid more attention to the approaching mass of thick energy that registered from his [Elevated Mana Manipulation].

'What's this? It's not Mana. It's more like... the energy that you'd find around Cluster cracks,' Skullius thought as his mana surged.

SCREEEEEE!

A loud, ghastly screech echoed, followed by another and another, visible distortions in the air showing all around from where loud thuds of the approaching creatures sounded!

Multiple large creatures approached from all directions making these screeching noises, their bodies exuding the hostile Primus!

BOOM!

In a rather quick manner, several buildings exploded from all directions of the town, large beasts launching themselves forward as they destroyed everything in their path.

They were four legged creatures with dark, lizard-like skin that reflected the overhead sun!

They used their front legs which were actually large, sickle-like blades that had a dark purple edge to dig into the ground and launch themselves forward at a remarkable speed, their arched backs with smaller legs that had similar designs trailing behind!

They had spherical heads that had multiple orifices around them, small, sharp teeth visible within them.

The loud screeches came from these little holes and nothing else could be seen on the faces of these creatures where large, thick scales covered.

"That's creepy..." Skullius said with a frown.

Gertreld showed an expression of disgust as she saw the creatures that pounded the ground and obliterated everything as they bolted forward, their bodies emitting a dark purple mist!

"Hmmm... that's not quite what I expected..." Tulnas said with a look of disappointment upon his face. "They are vastly weaker than I imagined."

He raised his hand slowly, with his index and middle finger clasped together, a vicious amount of white mana coiling around his body with a powerful quake under his feet!

A low growl was heard as he did this, his eyes resolute.

But...

Gertreld held back Tulnas' hand.

"Please, dear," she said with loving eyes, looking up at Tulnas' face. "Let us handle it."

Tulnas smiled and dropped his hand.

That's right. He had trusted companions with him.

"Very well," he said.

Beneath Tulnas' greaves, the dry ground started to ripple, soil moving away as something else started jutting out in popping shifts like boiling water.

Soon, a mass of sand rose from the ground, creating an odd arc shape behind Tulnas.

The golden brown sand that rose had numerous tiny bits of sparkling blue particles like shiny gems within it and as it settled, it formed a simple chair upon which Tulnas sat while leaning against the back rest comfortably.

"Well? Get to it," he said. "Focus on offense, I'll keep the civilians safe."

Gertreld smiled gracefully as she looked to where the creatures were fast approaching.

She felt jittery.

Just like her though, a certain Discount Human was also feeling the same but for a completely different reason.

He wanted to vent to his rage at these monsters.

He formed his hands into fists and dashed forward, Red Rage following after!

His eyes narrowed as he deduced information about these dark creatures.

Chapter 256: How Will He Fare?

~~~

[ Name : None ]

[ Tier : 4 ]

[ Level : 34 ]

[ Race : Obscene Stalker Ghoul ]

[ Inv. Status : Agitated ]

-----

[ Stats ]

[ Strength (I) : 21 (Empowered) ]

[ Agility (I) : 35 (Empowered) ]

[ Intelligence (I) : 12 (Empowered) ]

[ Endurance (I) : 29 (Empowered) ]

[ Luck : 47 ]

-----

[ Health (I) : 467/467 ]

-----

[ Mana : 15,100/18,000 ]

~~~

Around forty of these monsters rushed from all directions, and as if they had planned it, Gertreld, Natalika, Ginie and Skullius sped in four different directions as they headed for the incoming enemies!

Tulnas whose sensory abilities were applied on a vast scale smirked as he saw everyone going to deal with their respective targets.

'Connect with me. Don't let any one of the strays get to the civilians,' Tulnas commanded in his thoughts, the sands that formed a chair under him shifting slightly as if to affirm his order.

'You still sense it, right?' he thought before pausing a bit and nodding his head.

Tulnas' goals when using the Seed of Quintess' Eye had been to heal the infected and also, to draw whatever he had hypothesised was keeping tabs on the areas in this region.

If these guys were hiding, surely they wouldn't completely neglect to make sure they stayed hidden, right?

As for the leakage in Primus energy, Tulnas assumed it was coming from whatever was spying on them. However, this was merely a side effect to the real thing that was causing the matter he was here for.

Primus was involved, he was sure, but this little application wasn't what was causing the hubbub.

As for the unknown stalkers which he had finally showed themselves, using the overbearing energy of the Eye was his way of trying to agitate the creatures that exuded hostile energy and spotting their positions.

Fortunately, it worked but he was also cautious of the fact that this could be used by the enemy as a distraction against him for them to run away or relocate as he had confirmed that they knew he was onto them.

Thus, while also keeping an eye on everything in the town, he was also checking for anything odd outside with his more wide area 'tools'.

The blindfolded lady, Natalika zipped through the streets at quick speeds.

She held the hilt of her longsword, a coating of mana which looked rather solid and refined revolving around her.

One of the Ghouls screeched as it galloped with its blade legs towards her!

Natalika prepared to draw her sword as her mana turned sharp, but then, something unexpected happened!

The Ghoul right blade suddenly rose, becoming smothered in thick bursts of dark purple energy that absorbed the light almost turning the area dark!

A mirage occurred as the air seemed to get superheated!

The blade then slashed right in front of it, and shockingly, a tear appeared in the air where the creature hurriedly leapt in, vanishing from sight !

...!

Natalika stopped and drew back, around her, mana gathering instantly in a one-meter radius!

She lowered her stance as she prepared for an attack, her unique senses searching around her with keen and eager lust for information!

Sound, sensation, smell.

These had been honed to the point where Natalika could use them to sense the presence of energies and not just material existences at a ridiculous level.

SWIISHHH!

A thunderous slash appeared from nowhere, rocking the entire section of the town like an earthquake as it clashed with Natalika's expanse of mana!

Sparks flew as a sound akin to metal clashing against metal resounded!

Natalika remained calm as she analysed, her mana barely rippling from the clash of strength with invisible attack that had stormed it!

'So that's it...? They can hide in the folds of space? No. That's not it... Its more like...' she thought, before her head bobbed up with her instincts and experienced senses showed her the way!

Such a simple but tricky ability!

Right then, Natalika pulled out her sword and swiped laterally in the blink of an eye!

A long, shiny katana with alternating stripes of silver and white on its blade shot from the scabbard, going through the space where Natalika's mana was protectively surrounding her, the white energy parting for the sword to exercise its full potential!

'Demented Blindsword Technique, Demented Slash!'

The moment this lateral slash struck forward, blood spurted out from the open air, with a loud screech of pain echoing out!

With the attack though, one could identify something amiss, which was that the trail of blood in the open air was vertical, going from top to bottom even though Natalika had struck with a lateral arc!

WHOOSH!

From the open space, a dark, scythe-like leg from the Ghoul swiped through with an incredible speed towards Natalika, the superheated air around it dancing in waves as the area turned a few shades darker!

The blindfolded swordswoman dropped as she lowered her stance even further...

With a burst of wind that forged a mini tornado, Natalika's figure vanished from her position, the Ghoul's leg slicing through nothing but air!

As it performed the fruitless action...

SWISHHHH!

Red blood flew everywhere where nothing could be seen except the natural space and a natural blade arm sticking out of said space!

Four lateral incisions marked by the flying blood showed everywhere, Natalika's figure appearing in the area two meters behind the creature's partially revealed form, her blade finishing its descent from a vertical slash!

Thud! Thud!

Dark chunks of flesh and limbs fell to the ground, revealed from their initially hidden state!

Natalika deduced and thought about several things as she turned to sense around the

dead Ghoul, loud thumps echoing from behind her as more of them approached, some even slicing through the air and jumping into the lacerations to hide themselves.

'So... this was what Tulnas wanted to confirm? It seems that these things are the ones that have been spying on us. Hmm, but this doesn't explain why he thinks it is all related to the emerging Clusters though.

I suppose he has yet to reveal that, or is simply trying to confirm it before sharing,' she thought before zipping towards the incoming enemies two of which were dispatched instantly with her Demented Blindsword Technique, blood flying from their bodies!

As she set her foot down, expanding her mana to encircle her, she couldn't help but divert some of her senses towards the newest addition to their Guild.

'I wonder how he will fare against these. Will he find out on his own the secret to their abilities to defeat them? That's also if he can handle the raw power of a blue core beast with his own lacking strength,' Natalika thought.

Either way, she couldn't help him as it would put her at risk.

Skullius dashed towards one of the Ghouls with a visibly upset visage.

He grabbed the hilt to [Demion's Dance]...

"...no. Let's punch this thing to death," he said to himself.

He wanted relieve his stress by pounding this thing with his raw physicality.

For that, a mass of darkness oozed out of him, its sheer appearance making the space in its immediate surroundings deform into swirling lines!

With this darkness smothering Skullius, Tulnas sensed the unique power, his attention being grabbed instantly.

Truly, one had to ask.

How would the Discount Human fare?

Chapter 257: Master of Evil Darkness (1)

..!

Natalika furrowed her brows as she sensed the intense sensation from the darkness conjured by Skullius!

It was odd to her senses, like something that was too unnatural to fully grasp and ground to reality.

As if it scaled up to... Divinity!

Ginie and Gertreld also turned as they sensed the peculiar energy signature in their own ways, the sensations this profound energy gave them being quite unique.

It was truly odd, yet attractive drawing on their expanded sensory abilities!

It demanded to be acknowledged!

Slivers from the mass of [Evil Darkness] conjured by the Insurgent Magnus created a coating around Skullius that did not hide his appearance but outlined him like a drawing, perfectly filming his figure in darkness.

The moment this happened, Skullius who had been heading for the Ghoul ahead of him at a high speed, suddenly shot forward like a straight, dark image with no intention of stopping!

The ground underneath his feet exploded as he took light steps with each advance, jumping up and dropping over the Ghoul with readily prepared attack!

The Discount Human's form was proper, directly contrasting how he had been a some days ago before training.

He was cautious and conscious of his surroundings even as he moved in midair!

The Ghoul looked up at him and screeched, clearly being able to read his movements which had been augmented by [Evil Darkness] partially!

The creature launched its blade leg at Skullius as he was in mid-air, the limb fuming with dark purple energy!

The movement was very fast, the blade reaching Skullius who remained calm, yet angry as a thunderous force descended on him along with it!

Surprisingly, the Discount Human emitted a plume of the darkness which made even the Ghoul grunt in acknowledgement of the danger it sensed!

The darkness formed a curved shield at Skullius' side right as the blade was about to hit him, a loud creaking sound echoing as the two met with a ferocious amount of force!

Sparks flew with Skullius' curved darkness shield remaining intact, the Discount Human continuing his descent until he spun like a top and hammered down with his heel, all his might going down to the Ghoul's head!

BOOM!

A windy shockwave spread outwards from the impact, digging through the streets that the two fought on while demolishing the nearby infrastructure, the head of the Ghoul lowering from the immense force!

This was the full power strike of the base Discount Human!

Skullius reached the ground and immediately launched an uppercut at the creature that didn't seem to have received much damage from his previous attack!

His fist glowed with a brilliant light that produced a loud thrum and thirst for blood, the attack banging into the Ghoul's jaw with a loud cracking sound before the monster actually flew up high while screeching in pain, its hard exterior suffering damage!

The brilliant light was the same pseudo skill he had used against Renialid which was produced by the combination of [Mana Force], [Raw Impact], [Guard Light], [Great Rush I] and [Flash Flicker], the mash of skills that he had wanted to turn into a singular skill but failed at.

He could only cast all these skill simultaneously, achieving this current result while also showing his incredible proficiency in manipulating the many skills as he pleased.

'Hmph!' Skullius grunted as he leapt up, his other hand glowing as well, as he then threw a flurry of punches at what he thought would be the vitals of this Ghoul!

The creature screeched as it tried to counter the attacks that caused its innards to shudder, swiping both its blade at a ridiculous speed that Skullius couldn't have possibly reacted to at his current level!

However...

Sparks flew as Skullius countered with another curved shield of [Evil Darkness]!

...!

The creature was flabbergasted to see yet again, this human with a core lower than its own reacting to its movement, but the reality was different.

The Discount Human had learned the basics of reading attacks before they were executed.

This creature was clearly not an expert in combat and for Skullius who trained under the Assassin class expert Oliviana, reading what it would do next and responding accordingly before it could attack despite the wide gap in stats was easy!

'I might be getting a few hits in, but it's barely doing any damage. To end this quickly, I'd have to use my 'Radiant Awakening' at full blast but that would deplete my mana too quickly,

...!' Skullius thought but stopped this thread of thought midway as he sensed a disturbance in the mana around him!

Something was approaching from his side while being hidden quite well!

He could only sense this thing because he felt the gathering of mana with his [Elevated Mana Manipulation]!

From his right, another Ghoul rushed towards him with its blade brimming with purple energy that roared with a vicious heat that almost blew Skullius away as it appeared, but he firmly remained rooted to the ground..

"Good. Come and get it, you fleshly bastards!" he roared before clasping his hands together with a crazed grin as a large amount of mana was consumed!

Right before his two new enemies could converge towards his position, a burst of wild [Evil Darkness] shot out from Skullius in an instant, covering an area of six meters in all directions simultaneously!

The mass of darkness squirmed as in the next moment, a solid and perfect dark cube was formed!

...!

Tulnas edged in his seat from excitement.

His senses were cut off from what Skullius was about to do within this large object he had construed!

He watched the surroundings around the large dark cube turn into distorted lines and discoloured backgrounds and narrowed his eyes!

Within the darkness, Skullius focused around him where his enemies were!

CRACK! CRACK!

Screech!

A sound onky Skullius could hear ensued.

One of the Ghouls which had been hidden before suddenly emerged, the cover it has been using shattering like glass, pieces of colour falling to the ground as its body was revealed!

Skullius could sense its shock and this brought him no small amount of glee!

He knew what they were experiencing and it was an extremely annoying situation to say the least.

An annoying and fatal situation.

His mana churned as a whole bunch of information was fed into his mind.

"Ha! I see. What a nice trick!" he called as he cackled.

Everything that occurred in this domain of darkness was made to him, for he was master over the darkness!

Chapter 258: Master of Evil Darkness (2)

Skullius had been slowly mastering [Evil Darkness], beginning with a method to avoid wasting darkness as he usually did when trying to maximise the stat benefits he was granted!

The way he found most effective while keeping the massive boost effect was to shape the darkness into a fixed shape that didn't leak any excess.

It had taken some time for him to find out which shape was most suitable, but after looking at the space he spent his time in, the cell, he finally made a decision.

A cube would be best.

He practised by trying to fill the entire cell with the darkness and maintaining the shape as the darkness conformed to the structure of the cell.

With the continuous practise and the use of [Advanced Evil Weaving], Skullius finally forged, the skill, [Perfect Night Domain].

Frankly, this wasn't a name he chose but one that was recommended by Oliviana when he asked a hypothetical question that used the traits of the domain as content.

Of course, due to the nature of the way he created this skill, Skullius was given the option to name the skill himself which he hiddenly delegated.

Within the dark domain, every little detail about all events within would be fed to him along with additional, insane boons.

He was about to demonstrate these at this moment.

'To think these creatures can actually cut up... the surroundings and...wear them like clothes,' Skullius thought as he analysed the tricky skill that these monsters possessed.

When the third Ghoul had appeared, its cover disappearing, the exact details of what had happened had been transferred to his mind.

Unfortunately, the Ghoul couldn't 'wear' the surroundings in the [Perfect Night Domain] and Skullius wagered that it was because of the effect that [Evil Darkness] now had on its immediate surroundings!

Now, this Ghoul and its mates were actually stuck in the heavy atmosphere of the darkness where they saw nothing, heard nothing, felt nothing and smelled nothing!

Strangely, even the once brimming energy around them, glowing with a purple hue had been suppressed to mere light bursts of less than an inch long!

Everything within the Domain was up to Skullius to decide.

(A/N: Not to be confused with 'Majestic Territory').

The bodies of the Ghouls felt extremely heavy as movement was possible but only at a very dismal level!

"Pretty weird, but now..." Skullius said before he dashed towards the Ghouls!

With the 80% amplification on his stats within the darkness, Skullius blasted forward like a divine arrow, the darkness feeling like home, as it propelled him even further, with little resistance!

Within less than the blink of an eye, Skullius was right before the first Ghoul which he had been pummeling before, his fist brightening up as he coated it in 'Radiant Awakening' and smashed the creature in the centre of its face!

Silence!

No sound was emitted but the cracking of the creature's face in Skullius' vision was more than satisfactory!

He could sense all the sound effects within the [Perfect Night Domain] but didn't share them.

He watched the Ghoul fly backwards, sinking further into the darkness as it wailed soundlessly, his attention turning to the others that heard nothing while turning their heads this way and that in panic!

They even tried to swipe at the air to tear up the space but it was to no avail!

The Discount Human wiggled his fingers in the silent darkness as right in front of him, a large and long simplistic spear appeared, its build comprising entirely of darkness that only he could distinguish from the rest!

He pulled back and hurled the spear which bolted towards one the Ghouls, aiming directly at one of the many orifices on its face and successfully penetrating it!

Red blood spewed, flying messily as the spear entered and exited out the back of the Ghoul's head, the creature screeching in pain as it trembled, falling back!

This wasn't enough to end it unfortunately.

Skullius noticed this and zoomed ahead, appearing right above the creature, his hands blazing with the light of many skills as he then launched a flurry of purposeful punches that hammered into the creatures' head at full strength!

Had they not been in a still space that didn't quake from the impact, the noise from the thunderous strikes would have been horrendous!

Within seven seconds, the Ghoul that had been punished with dozens upon dozens of fists stopped moving, its bloody face showing the toothy orifices around it to be twitching their last.

[You have killed (IV) LV35 Obscene Stalker Ghoul. 605,000 Exp awarded]

[Your prey emits the Essence of Null Life. Would you like to extract it? Remaining time 59 seconds]

Skullius immediately extracted the essence, the figure which came from the extraction and into his status panel being...

100!

A 100 Null Life Essence points!

This caused a shock to Skullius who immediately stored the dead body in his spatial storage and drew back.

This was a large number that he had yet to see even from the largest of monsters he had faced.

How was this creature different?

Skullius' mind immediately pointed towards the tag that he had seen in front of all the stats of the Ghouls.

<Empowered>.

Once again, what he had analysed before the fight came to mind.

The dark purple energy that encased these monsters was peculiar and it reminded him of the energy from Clusters.

Could it be that they were being strengthened by a Deity's power?

Pawns of the Evenfall that had their abilities augmented by unnatural powers!

While in the middle of his thoughts, Skullius felt a shift in the distance, his head turning as he saw and felt some changes on the Ghoul he had knocked away before!

It soundlessly screeched as its spherical head bobbed, the centre protruding as if something was about to pop out!

With one sudden motion, the hard flesh on the creature split, something appearing at the front of its head!

An eye!

A dark eye with a light purple iris which had glittering spots of white like stars!

Skullius sensed from the information he received, the power of this eye starting to part his solid darkness, vibrant waves of the dark purple energy surging into the air as the Ghoul passively got stronger, pushing away the Discount Human's advantageous area skill!

The eye widened as liquid ooze flowed from the sides of the creature's eye, dull sounds starting to reach Skullius as the monster screeched, waves of energy pulsating from it!

In the next moment, a beam of purple energy rose from the creature like a pillar, rupturing the surrounding darkness without much resistance as it headed into the sky!

A reverberation was heard and seen, ploughing through the [Perfect Night Domain] in an outwards motion while seeking to completely destroy it!

Half of the domain was obliterated in an instant, Skullius grinning at this show of power, as his advanced senses told him that this wild power was not the creature's own!

The Discount Human clasped his hands together once more, the other half of the [Perfect Night Domain] that had begun to break apart as well, solidifying!

The Ghoul that was now free screeched loudly as it pulsed with strength, probably having used its trump card!

Billows of purple darkness shuddered around it as it bulged, getting bigger in size.

Skullius looked on at this with nothing but a calm visage however.

His rage had been somewhat abated, but he wasn't done.

He smirked next as while in the cover of darkness, he extended his right hand, his index pointing ahead with his palm open, facing upwards.

The Discount Human revealed his remaining card in the [Evil Darkness] deck.

"It's too late to use your hidden cards now..." he said softly, as the [Evil Darkness] around him trembled and then pulled itself onto Skullius' finger!

The [Perfect Night Domain] collapsed onto itself, all the darkness rushing to fit above Skullius' index finger as a small orb of darkness the size of a fist emerged!

The remaining Ghoul that had been left inside the [Perfect Night Domain], appeared once again in the recognisable space and was visibly happy to be free, but an ominous sensation caused it to pause!

Skullius focused on the powering up Ghoul before him as the mass of darkness above his palm readied.

It was the new skill he held, [Bead of Malevolence]!

VWUUP!

Before anyone could marvel at the scenes they could now see, a dark trail appeared for a fraction of a fraction of second from Skullius to the edging Ghoul!

No sound came out to signal the instant defeat but those who had been watching were awed.

From a good view, one could see a perfect circular hole in the head of the Tier 4 Obscene Stalker Ghoul as blood then started to leak out, its body falling to the ground as the energy around it disappeared.

At the same time, the same dark trail suddenly appeared near Skullius, revolving around him like an orbiting moon...

Chapter 259: The Next Step

Tulnas chuckled.

This was utterly ridiculous.

Once again, he realised that he had heavily underestimated this young man who looked to be a few years younger than him.

Never did he expect to see such a ridiculous level of ingenuity with his attacks.

He had expected the so-called flame attack that destroyed one of the libraries in the College of the Esteemed to be his peak but that turned out to not be the case.

Skullius wasn't a one trick pony.

What further cemented Skullius' value was what his summon had been doing while the Discount Human had enclosed himself in the large dark barrier with the three enemies.

It had dispatched two of the Obscene Stalker Ghouls on its own by using a rather flashy but powerful looking skill that existed out of the norm he was used to.

Or rather not a single skill, but skills.

"Fascinating..." Tulnas said, his head once again shaking in the next moment. "I get it already, you Fur Coat! You were right!"

Bursts of vibrant annoyance palpated.

In the distance, Natalika had slaughtered twelve Obscene Stalker Ghouls with her striped sword, her figure standing on one of the corpses as she quickly swiped away the blood.

She had been paying attention to Skullius and his movements and she had to say, she was greatly impressed.

A Mage truly was a Mage.

And one that had such intricate Class Branching was a gem.

Gertreld had slaughtered thirteen of the monsters while Ginie who was breathing heavily with a contorted face was killing her ninth.

These two had also been taking glances at Skullius' fight along with the Ghouls themselves and they felt confident having a powerful Guild member, even though he was cursed.

All three of the girls had also experienced the phenomenon where the Ghouls opened their skins at the head to reveal the purple eye.

It was probably a hidden ability of theirs which they used when they drew in the Primus that mysteriously augmented their bodies.

However, none of them were foolish enough to let the creatures do as they pleased and thus they immediately killed them before they could use the eye fully.

The man who had captured everyone's attention breathed out a sigh.

The [Bead of Malevolence] slowly revolved around him, awaiting its next target.

Skullius had decided to focus on the application of darkness that he had grown used to ever since the time when he used [Crude World Projection] during his fight with Jackpot.

He had formed the darkness into a darting orb that would move at insane speeds to help him win that fight.

He had used the same attack during the fight with the Sage Monkeys and after some thought, he decided to refine it by abusing [Crude World Projection] to hasten his understanding of the ability until he could use it with same level of efficiency in his base form, ultimately creating a skill which deserved a name from him specifically.

He had also delegated this task.

Skullius looked around only to find Red Rage having retrieved his bow and arrows, as well as his sword from the ring.

The blade dripped of blood and he immediately stored it along with the bow and arrows which had all be upgraded with [Unbound].

"You seem to be having fun," Skullius said to Red Rage as he moved the orb floating around him once again, the object turning into a dark trail like a laser, instantly killing the Ghoul that was left after he released the [Perfect Night Domain].

[You have killed (IV) LV34 Obscene Stalker Ghoul. 590,000 Exp awarded]

[Your prey...]

Skullius absorbed the Null Life Essence after approaching the creature.

"The experience has dropped noticeably. I guess I'm stronger than I was before," Skullius said internally chortling at his growing vocabulary.

Once more, he felt a weird sensation from his vast sensory capabilities with [Elevated Mana Manipulation].

A Ghoul remained, situated almost thirty meters away from the Discount Human.

It drew back upon seeing that all its other mates had been killed off before turning and running away with quick, bladed steps!

It raised its large blade and with a thunderous swiping that shook the portion of the city, it cut through the air and leapt in.

Skullius scoffed.

'It tries to give the illusion of entering another space when it's actually just assimilating the surroundings,' he thought as he watched the creature vanish.

The [Bead of Malevolence] immediately shot forward at his command right when the creature vanished, its presence disappearing but before it could move...

THUD!

Its body was revealed immediately after with a hole in the head as it fell.

The Discount Human received all the relevant experience but let go of the Null Life Essence.

He was sure this wasn't the last time he would be seeing creatures like this.

Frankly, it was pretty obvious that this perilous journey was just beginning.

"Come on, Red bro," Skullius said as he walked back to Tulnas.

The Guild leader had already begun to talk with the Town leader, informing him that the threats were taken care of.

Scorta was by the side listening in, hoping that her directive would change now that Tulnas had returned.

The people of the town were beginning to cheer and chatter as the fear that they had experienced superficially started to pass.

Afterall, this wasn't their first time seeing monsters invading the town.

Gertreld, Ginie and Natalika also moved towards Tulnas.

The young man turned from the old man he conversed with and smiled gently.

"Good work," he said as his eyes turned to Skullius. "You've managed to once again surprise me with your capabilities."

The Discount Human showed no obvious reaction.

"I see that even the blessing of a Deity failed to remove your curse. I thought it would work to take it away in the process of cleansing away the hostile Primus but clearly I underestimated your the strength of whoever cast it."

Skullius almost felt his non-existent heart jump up in fright at the mention of help, but then he realised that this man was a first-class sockethole.

He was obviously doing it for the greater benefit rather than for him in such a way that without the curse killing everyone left and right, he would probably think that this man was a genuine bro.

Too bad, it seemed he really only had eyes for women.

"Because of my gross underestimation of the situation, you girls are going to have to limit your interactions with our dear Mage. For now at least," Tulnas said with a smile that spelled nothing but caution.

Skullius didn't react to this as well.

It had to be done after all.

The ladies all nodded in understanding, though Natalika's focus remained on Skullius.

"Good. I have a lead on where our enemies are hidden. We need to set off right away before any changes occur. Scorta, you will remain here with the civilians. I trust that you can protect them from the remaining threats with the help of the Knights?" Tulnas said as he caressed the pony-tailed girl's cheek.

Scorta wss visibly shaken.

It was not that she didn't want to stay and protect all the helpless people, it was just that she wanted to join in with Tulnas after being here for so long.

"Yes, I can do that," she said as she lowered her head.

Tulnas leaned in and pecked her cheek which served to make her feel better as she nodded, affirming a second time that she would be able to accomplish what he had instructed.

The Guild leader turned to the old man.

"You can have the corpses and the cores from the beasts. I'm sure their value is more than enough to reconstruct the damaged parts of the town."

"Indeed," the Town leader said as he stroked his beard. "Indeed~."

Tulnas nodded and turned, Gertreld grabbing onto his arm.

"Alright, let's go solve this once and for all. I believe a hefty prize that will be worthy rubbing in certain people's faces will be in order then."

Chapter 260: Continuing Mystery

Six figures dashed ahead as they crossed the vast landscape full of thin patches of grass and the occasional tree.

Central was but a mere distant image from their position as they rushed ahead, heading for what had been unknown horizons a few minutes ago.

Skullius darted forward while trying keep up with Tulnas and his ladies who weren't holding back as much because time was of the essence.

Or so Tulnas said.

Still, Skullius wasn't being left behind along with Red Rage who eclipsed his Discount Human form when it came to speed and with his increased endurance, he was doing just fine.

At this time, Tulnas took the chance to explain his entire conjecture to the group.

"It would seem that Primus has been used to continuously spawn Clusters. At first I didn't know what kind of energy it was as its application was stealthy and unlike anything I had ever seen or felt.

However, when things started to go wrong back in Central and the other communities surrounding it a few months ago, I quickly noted that it was hostile Primus in action and one subtle detail made me sure that this was somehow linked to the Clusters," Tulnas said with a stern expression.

"Those that got touched by the Primus without any defence, got boils over their bodies. Many boils that spotted their skin. The idea of having diseases in general, means that our bodies are incapable or defending against a certain invading force. However, all humans, even non-combatants unconsciously draw in mana and some are even able to unconsciously wrap it around their bodies."

"Those whom we found to be plagued by the disease would obviously try to remain alive and that would encourage their bits of mana to wrestle against the Primus. In doing so, the boils would multiply and viciously spread. Does this phenomenon sound familiar?"

Gertreld's eyes lit up.

"The formation of normal Clusters?" she said, almost leaping up as she ran.

"That's right," Tulnas said with a nod.

While Primus was a form of divine energy, it was a lesser form of power compared to the other types of energy.

Bits of it released wouldn't be fatal to humanity and could even benefit other living things.

However, the term 'hostile' meant that where it was originating was not a neutral or benevolent source.

"It's common knowledge that humans have a greater form of balance than the other races mentioned throughout history. If unstable higher forms of energy are introduced to our bodies, we might as well react in the same way that Aigas does when conflicting energies mash together. And that is, unstable impurities are born based on what we already have in our bodies. Clusters and Cluster beasts."

Natalika nodded while Ginie gripped her staff tightly.

Seeing those people suffering from the boils had really tugged at her sympathy.

"So, using the same principle, the Evenfall is trying to create chaos using Primus energy? That's quite the dangerous fire they are messing with," the blindfolded swordswoman said.

"Indeed," Tulnas replied.

Skullius partially understood what the four were talking about.

The concept of humans being the most balanced creatures was a known and accepted theory that he had learned from the books he had read.

It was also true from his view that conjuring many Clusters could easily backfire, but perhaps the Evenfall had a plan for that.

The conversation turned into more of a speculation spree as the group traversed, the scenery changing rapidly.

Soon, the group started to descend under Tulnas' lead, the landscape changing from plain, flat ground and into a deep slope as it lead into a large water mass.

A lake.

The waters looked crystal clear under the sunlight and with the cute fishes visible within, one would be inclined to jump in and have a good time.

The group stopped.

Tulnas looked to both his sides, left and right.

There was nothing out of the ordinary when one applied plain sight.

Grasses grew more around the lake while scaling up the sides where steep and steeper slopes could be seen, as if defending the sanctity of the waters.

"Hmm, clever," Tulnas said as he scoffed. "Get back."

Everyone backed away a bit from Tulnas who edged towards the lake.

"This is the spot. An outrageous amount of Primus is leaking and disappearing here simultaneously. Also..."

Tulnas crouched down and touched the waters with his index finger before issuing an order.

"Do it."

From his fingertip that touched the face of the water, a ripple pulsed, going from the edge and sweeping over to the rest of the lake in beautiful arcs.

As this occurred, the once clean and clear waters started to change, dirt appearing within the mix as it sullied the once beautiful liquid.

The waters turned dark, with an almost pitch black hue as within them, the cute fishes that the group had seen before vanished, replaced by massive creature that immediately started to pull themselves out of the water and gaze at the group with barely hidden malice.

Six of them appeared, their appearances like shiny grey fish, carp to be exact, with the four limbs they used; two that looked like hands and the others like legs!

They shook off the waters from their bodies and screeched, their bodies exuding the dark purple fumes of Primus.

'Hmmm. So these things are consuming the Primus that's leaking from... hmm probably under the water. Those other ones from the town were probably sentries and not meant for combat. But these...' Tulnas thought.

Skullius looked at the statuses of these creatures and saw that they were Tier 4s, also having the <Empowered> tag over their stats which was massively higher than the ones of the Ghouls.

Shimmering blue cores shone from within them under his advanced sense and the Discount Human got vigilant.

One of the giant carp fish leapt up and when it came down, it set its feet above the waters, being able to stand over them as if it was the most natural thing to do.

It was smaller than the others but everyone here could tell that it was the strongest one.

It emitted a terrible screeched as from its forehead, its muscles and bone bulged and squelched, a slit appearing as in the next moment, a purple eye appeared.

...!

Skullius was about to act, along with everyone else except Tulnas who only narrowed his eyes as he analysed when...

OOOM!

The eye brightened up a great deal, the spots of light within it turning brighter and more intense!

WAAA!

The area suddenly felt colder and then, everyone felt weightless and when they tried to speak...

"Glub, glub?"